How to Save Maine’s Howland Forest?
Northeast Wilderness Trust Aims to Protect World-Class Research Site and Ecological Treasure

say “research forest” and northeastern conservationists might think of the venerable Harvard Forest founded in 1907 in western Massachusetts or, perhaps, the Hubbard Brook Experimental Forest established in 1955 in New Hampshire.

Few will have heard of Howland Forest, a magnificent 557 acres in central Maine. But here, for decades, scientists have been studying the ecological dynamics of a truly wild place, home to red spruce, hemlock and white cedars that started growing before the Civil War. Some of its trees are more than 500 years old.

Researchers from the University of Maine, Woods Hole Research Center, the U.S. Forest Service, and numerous other institutions have developed pioneering studies of acid rain, nutrient cycling and soil ecology at Howland Forest. For nearly 20 years, continuous measurements of forest carbon uptake and loss have been taken—a critical lens for understanding global climate change—and one of the longest-running such studies in the world. Hundreds of scientific papers and findings have drawn on discoveries made at Howland.

Research forests provide a long-term portrait of the changing health and composition of our returning forests, as species rise and fall in response to forces like forest maturation, pests, and air pollution. Howland Forest stands out from other long-term study areas in the Northeast because it is not managed, logged or manipulated, and its trees are older than any other research forest in the region. If preserved, Howland Forest would continue its unique role as a forever-wild research site that serves as a vital baseline of ecological normalcy.

But that’s a big “if!” It may all end unless we act now.

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Irreplaceable Reservoirs

The need to preserve wilderness areas as a baseline of ecological normalcy has long been promoted by conservationists and scientists. In 1942, ecologist E.L. Sumner wrote: “to the men of science, the dwindling wilderness is an irreplaceable reservoir of information on natural conditions.” He was not the first to recognize that the scientific study of wild places is crucial to understanding human impact on the land.

In 2005, the Northeast Wilderness Trust’s first conservation project was the protection of a wild forest dedicated to conservation science in Lincoln, Vermont. Now we are excited to announce our campaign to preserve the Howland Research Forest in central Maine, which is nationally recognized for its scientific findings and forest type. (See front page.)

Teams of scientists from agencies and universities across the country have used Howland’s old-growth forest for leading research on acid rain, forest health, and carbon sequestration since it was established as a research site over twenty years ago.

Scientific projects at Howland are resulting in critical discoveries about the impacts of climate change, perhaps the most pressing issue of our time. Data gathered there, on carbon sinks and sequestration, have long-term significance for our communities, economy and ecology. The Northeast Wilderness Trust is working with partners to purchase this important property and ensure that its biologically rich forest will continue to evolve, providing a natural benchmark for science. We welcome your support.

Also in this issue of our newsletter is a description of the Northeast Wilderness Trust’s newly acquired property—Boquet Flats, located in the Split Rock Wildway in the Adirondacks. (Learn more on page 4.) Your support made the acquisition of this strategic property possible—thank you.

We are excited to report that we are very close to reaching our fundraising goal for acquiring the Alder Stream property in central Maine. (See back page.) Please help us reach our target by protecting an acre for a friend, family member or colleague as a holiday gift. Save your self a trip to the mall and give the gift that gives back—nature.

All of us at the Northeast Wilderness Trust continue to be inspired by the hopeful work of private land protection. Thank you for joining us in our efforts to preserve this region’s wild and natural heritage. We could not do it without you.

Northeast Wilderness Trust is a regional land trust working to preserve and restore forever-wild landscapes for wildlife and people in New York, Vermont, New Hampshire, Maine, Massachusetts and Connecticut. Please contact us to learn how you can preserve your land or become a member today.

Northeast Wilderness Trust is a 501(c)3, membership organization.

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Wapack Wilderness
Wild Gem in a Still-forested Landscape

In the last few decades, conservation science has rediscovered a truth that John Muir (and ancient people long before him) understood: “When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the Universe.”

While land conservation necessarily moves forward one parcel at a time, landscape ecology has helped us realize that each wetland protected, each beautiful forest saved, is hitched to everything else around it.

In the same way, as the Northeast Wilderness Trust moves forward with our Wapack Wilderness campaign, we see it in a larger landscape: the remarkable Quabbin to Cardigan (Q2C) region, more than 3,000 square miles in the Monadnock Highlands of central Massachusetts and western New Hampshire.

Thanks to a history of forethought in private and public land protection, the Q2C region contains one of the largest remaining areas of intact contiguous forest in central New England. And at its center stands the 1400-acre Wapack Wilderness, owned by the Hampshire Country School in Rindge and New Ipswich, New Hampshire, which has been featured in the last several issues of this newsletter.

NWT is moving forward to secure the $1.4 million needed to establish a conservation easement for the Wapack Wilderness. While early in the campaign, we are pleased to report that we have raised $370,000. You can help NWT preserve the Wapack Wilderness for just $1,000 an acre—a bargain for southern New Hampshire.

This forever-wild protection will secure a key stretch of an interstate conservation corridor that will reach from the Quabbin Reservoir in Massachusetts to beyond New Hampshire’s Mount Cardigan.

NWT is eager to see the Wapack Wilderness play a role in the Quabbin to Cardigan Collaborative’s goal to “conserve large unfragmented forest blocks while they are still in relatively large ownerships, and secure links between new and existing conservation lands to form a continuous corridor of conservation land.”

So even as we seek to protect the individual value of the Wapack Wilderness—with its quiet stands of hemlock and oak forests, delicate mountain ponds, and a portion of the remote 21-mile Wapack Trail—we see greater value in what it is part of. The Q2C region is a key source of clean water for both the Connecticut and Merrimack River valleys, its highlands provide habitat for migratory birds and wide-ranging animals that are in decline elsewhere in New England due to habitat fragmentation, and its extensive forest cover serves as a model of what could be.

There are several ways you can help us finish this historic effort:

☞ Consider making your own pledge, or a pledge in the name of someone important to you—preserving an acre or several of wilderness would make a memorable holiday gift.

☞ Tell your family, friends and colleagues about this unprecedented opportunity.

☞ Help contact people who may want to contribute.

☞ Pass on to us names of people you think should know about the project.

☞ Share your ideas about how we can ensure a successful effort.

Special thanks to the Conservation Alliance for helping NWT advance the Wapack Wilderness Conservation Campaign. And a very warm welcome to Dorothy and Walter Peterson, the Honorary Chairs of the Wapack Wilderness Leadership Committee. Thanks also to commit-tee members Bob Boynton, Eve Endicott, Anne Faulkner (Co-Chair), Art Fiorelli, Liz Freeman, Mary Jane Grasty, Virginia Harnden (Co-Chair), Barbara Richter, Rebecca Todd, and Rick Van de Poll.
Imagine a moose that decides to leave Vermont, one warm afternoon, and swim across Lake Champlain to New York. Should it be fortunate enough to clamber ashore at Split Rock Mountain, it might, with a bit of gumption, travel westward and uphill, finally settling into the deep-woods security of the Adirondack Park.

To get there, it might well find the only way through is the now-forming Split Rock Wildway, a habitat linkage extending from the Champlain Valley of New York to the Jay Range Wilderness in the Adirondacks. NWT is pleased to announce its most recent land acquisition—Boquet Flats, a 96-acre northern hardwood forest located on the flanks of Boquet Mountain. This important property provides habitat to a diversity of wildlife and is a strategic stepping stone in the Wildway. Thank you for helping us purchase this critical property. Special thanks to the Common Stream Foundation. With your continued support we aim to purchase the adjacent forest parcel and look forward to keeping you updated on our progress.

You can help this effort by contributing to the Split Rock Wildway campaign, using the enclosed envelope.

Howland Forest has hosted researchers from across the country, initially serving as a site for studies on acid rain, nutrient cycling, soil ecology, and remote sensing. More recently, teams of scientists have been researching carbon dioxide, nitrogen and carbon sequestration. Howland now has one of the longest records of carbon flux measurements in the world. © BRYAN DAIL

Eric A. Davidson, Ph.D., senior scientist, The Woods Hole Research Center

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The Howland Research Forest was recently sold. This change of ownership puts the data, research program, and old-growth forest at great risk. Long term research is dependent on a secure site.

Recognizing the imminent threat to their research, Howland scientists contacted NWT to find a solution. NWT secured an option to acquire the research forest by June 2007. The total project cost is $1,000,000.

The Northeast Wilderness Trust is now moving quickly to help preserve this nationally recognized research forest. If we are to fully understand the impact of human activity on the northeastern landscape, these kinds of biological reservoirs must be preserved—and understood. Protecting the Howland Research Forest will enable the continuation of rigorous scientific study that has global implications for our understanding of forest ecology.

Please help us preserve the Howland Research Forest by making a donation today. See the membership and donation coupon on the enclosed envelope.

A special thanks to the Orchard Foundation for helping launch this important campaign and to the Henry P. Kendall Foundation and Merck Family Fund for helping with outreach.

I have been conducting research at Howland, Maine, since 1991 and have come to know well its soils and trees. The Howland Forest is a remarkable and rare example of a mature forest in eastern North America and thus provides a critical piece of the puzzle in understanding how humans have changed the cycles of carbon, nitrogen and other elements through the biosphere. We have learned for example, that even this very old forest is continuing to withdraw carbon from the atmosphere. This result runs contrary to the view in many textbooks that mature forests quickly approach a steady state with respect to carbon...Instead we now understand that natural and human disturbances in the landscape leave legacies that live on for centuries, including continued carbon uptake by forests centuries after it was disturbed. In this era of carbon trading as a tool to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, determining market value of carbon stored by mature forests will require this type of understanding...Our learning about this forest is far from over. By continuing our studies we will be able to demonstrate how changes in regional and global phenomena, such as acid rain and global warming, are affecting mature forests...Without this study site...we would be left with a huge gap in our understanding...

Eric A. Davidson, Ph.D., senior scientist, The Woods Hole Research Center
We’re very pleased to announce that David S. Berkowitz joined the NWT board of directors in April. David is a private investor based in Bridgeport, Connecticut. He is a member of the credit committee for the Microbusiness Development Corporation, on the board of the Helen and William Mazer Foundation and member of the board of directors for the Center for the Development of Social Finance. David, a former Peace Corps volunteer, has worked as a business counselor advising start-up businesses, a credit analyst for a socially responsible lender, and a consultant to microlending organizations.

We’re also delighted to welcome Matt Ethridge as our new Development Coordinator. Matt interned with NWT throughout the winter and spring of 2006 and joined the staff in the fall. Matt holds a B.A. in Philosophy from Reed College, and an M.B.A. from Brandeis University’s Heller School for Social Policy and Management. He is excited to be working with others who share his love of wilderness, and to work for the preservation of the Northeast’s wild places.

We’d like to extend our appreciation to three hard-working interns: Jay Astle is pursuing a master’s degree in environmental planning at Tufts University with a focus on natural resource protection. During the summer and fall, he assisted with several baseline reports for NWT properties and site visits. Jay previously worked for Earth Share of New England and The Trustees of Reservations. Cara Camerato has been studying environmental science at Brandeis University and working in the real estate market as an associate broker. Cara’s passion for the outdoors developed through her visits to her family cottage in Maine and her love of rowing. Amelia Shenstone is entering her final semester at Mount Holyoke College, majoring in philosophy. She hopes to build a career helping companies integrate environmental sustainability into their strategies.

Volunteers are crucial to NWT’s land protection efforts, and there are as many ways to contribute your time and energy as there are reasons for caring about northeastern wilderness conservation:

**Easement Monitoring** Help NWT monitor conserved lands, ensuring compliance with our easements.

**Outdoor Programs** Lead a field trip for kids or adults to one of NWT’s conserved properties.

**Conducting Research and Outreach** Help NWT stitch together wildlife corridors and build membership by researching, photographing properties for slide shows and publications, and tabling at events throughout the Northeast.

**“Fundraising” Parties** Among NWT’s most effective membership building tools are the gatherings hosted by NWT members in their homes to introduce us to friends and neighbors.

**Community Membership Liaison** Help NWT build its membership base by sending us names of people in your community who would be likely supporters of NWT’s work.

Office Help Join the NWT staff in our Boston office as we prepare mailings, update databases, and complete other administrative tasks.

Call us to find out how you can help: 617-742-0628. Thank you for your support; we could not do it without you!

Following NWT’s annual meeting in October, board members and staff enjoy a hike on the Anderson property in Lincoln, VT, protected by NWT in 2003.
Wonder what you should be giving this holiday season? Put Alder Stream on your list and help NWT finish its campaign to purchase this special place.

Give someone a gift this year that will last, well, forever.

We’re 90% of the way to our fundraising goal of $340,000 in our campaign to protect 1,500 remarkable acres along Alder Stream, Maine—thanks to many generous gifts and new members. But we have a December 2006 deadline to get the job done. Please consider donating now—or giving contributions to the Alder Stream campaign as gifts this holiday season. For just $226 per acre you can protect a piece of the wild for a friend or family member. All recipients will receive picturesque certificates indicating the amount of acreage protected in their name. It’s easy; see details on the enclosed envelope.

USFWS Report Highlights Need to Preserve Rivers Like Alder Stream for Salmon

The recovery of several salmon populations is cause for rejoicing—and redoubled effort. The recently released third edition of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s Maine Atlantic Salmon Habitat Atlas details recovered salmon spawning and rearing sites along the Piscataquis River, reinforcing this waterway’s value for conservation. The Piscataquis forms the northern boundary of the Alder Stream property that NWT is working to protect; the river is fed by Alder Stream (pictured) which runs through the property. Together, we can save Alder Stream for many creatures—including salmon.

Wilderness Needs Friends!

Join NWT’s staff and board as they work to engage more conservationists of all stripes in our hopeful work. Consider giving a gift membership or sharing with us the name and mailing address of a conservation-minded friend or family member. Please use the enclosed envelope.